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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Special theme: "Climate change, biocultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges"

Recommendations on the special theme, "Climate change, biocultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges"

1. As stewards of the world's biodiversity and cultural diversity, indigenous peoples' traditional livelihoods and ecological knowledge can significantly contribute to designing and implementing appropriate and sustainable mitigation and adaptation measures. Indigenous peoples can also assist in crafting the path towards developing low-carbon release and sustainable communities.

2. Indigenous peoples' ancestors have adapted to climate change for thousands of years; however, the magnitude, accelerated pace and compound effects of climate change today are unprecedented, thus presenting major challenges to indigenous peoples' capacity to adapt. Further, some of the mitigation measures seen as solutions to climate change are also having negative impacts on indigenous peoples.

3. Strategies for mitigation and adaptation must be holistic, taking into account not only the ecological dimensions of climate change, but also social impacts, human rights, equity and environmental justice. Indigenous peoples, who have the smallest ecological footprints, should not be asked to carry the heavier burden of adjusting to climate change.

4. The Permanent Forum notes the importance of acknowledging global climate change and the need to address it with urgency, as well as implementing clean, just, sustainable and renewable energy practices in localized economies to address the problems faced by indigenous peoples.

5. The Permanent Forum notes that the clean development mechanism, the Clean Energy Investment Framework, the Nairobi Framework, the Nairobi Work Programme and the Global Environment Facility adaptation funds are good

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examples of the kind of partnership that will become increasingly important. These mechanisms must respond to the needs of indigenous peoples and include them as partners in designing and implementing programmes that are responsive to local problems and to the goals and visions of indigenous women and men.

6. Scientists, policymakers and the international community as a whole should undertake regular consultations with indigenous peoples so that their studies and decisions will be informed by indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and experiences. The Permanent Forum can play a role in ensuring that the traditional knowledge and best practices of indigenous peoples relevant to fighting climate change and its impacts will be considered in the negotiation processes leading to the Copenhagen Conference of the Parties and beyond, including through discussions with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

7. The principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity, social justice and sustainable development and development with identity should remain the key principles underpinning the negotiations, policies and programmes on climate change. The human rights based approach to development and the ecosystem approach should guide the design and implementation of local, national, regional and global climate policies and projects. The crucial role of indigenous women and indigenous youth in developing mitigation and adaptation measures should also be ensured.

8. The Permanent Forum recommends that the international community take serious measures to mitigate climate change. The survival of the traditional ways of life of indigenous peoples depends in large part on the success of international negotiations in developing strong, enforceable agreements that will truly be effective in combating climate change. The Permanent Forum concurs with a major conclusion of the Stern report that strong and immediate measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions now will be less costly than attempting to adapt to the widespread changes that unchecked climate change will cause in the future.

9. The Permanent Forum notes the following reports and declarations:

(a) Report of the Conference on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change, held in Copenhagen on 21 and 22 February 2008, organized by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA);

(b) Report of the North America Region Preparatory Group Meeting for the seventh session of the Permanent Forum, held in Vancouver, Canada, on 22 and 23 February 2008, and hosted by the First Nations Summit;

(c) Declaration of the Latin America Region Preparatory Meeting for the seventh session of the Permanent Forum, held in La Paz on 17 March 2008, hosted by Fondo Indígena;

(d) Declaration on Climate Change of the Latin America Region Preparatory Meeting for the seventh session of the Permanent Forum, held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on 3 and 4 April 2008, hosted by IWGIA and Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social.

10. The Permanent Forum welcomes the report of the United Nations international expert meeting on indigenous peoples and climate change, held in Darwin, Australia, organized by the United Nations University, the secretariat of the

Permanent Forum and the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance in April 2008.

11. The Forum welcomes the forthcoming global summit on indigenous peoples and climate change, which is being organized by the Inuit Circumpolar Council with the assistance of other indigenous peoples' organizations.

12. The Forum thanks the special rapporteurs, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Aqqaluuk Lynge, for their report on the impact of climate change mitigation measures on indigenous peoples and on their territories and lands (E/C.19/2008/10) and supports the recommendations (paras. 68-90) highlighted in that report.

13. The following recommendations must be implemented in accordance with the principles and rules of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially in accordance with its articles 19 (the principle of free, prior and informed consent), 29 (the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources), 31 (the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts) and 32 (the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources).

Recommendations

General

14. The Permanent Forum recommends that, in the Arctic and the Amazon regions, which are indicators of climate change for the rest of the world, Member States work closely with indigenous peoples. The discussions and negotiations on climate change should respect the rights of indigenous peoples to nurture and develop their traditional knowledge and their environment-friendly technologies. In the case of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation and inhabiting the most biodiverse areas in the Amazon, the primary requirement of their free prior and informed consent for any alien intervention must be stressed.

15. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should serve as a key and binding framework in the formulation of plans for development and should be considered fundamental in all processes related to climate change at the local, national, regional and global levels. The safeguard policies of the multilateral banks and the existing and future policies on indigenous peoples of United Nations bodies and other multilateral bodies should be implemented in all climate change-related projects and programmes.

16. The Forum recommends that States, United Nations agencies, bodies and funds, other multilateral bodies and financial institutions and other donors provide technical and financial support to protect and nurture indigenous peoples' natural resource management, environment-friendly technologies, biodiversity and cultural diversity and low-carbon, traditional livelihoods (pastoralism; rotational or swidden agriculture; hunting and gathering and trapping; marine and coastal livelihoods; high mountain agriculture; etc.). The Forum further recommends that discussions and negotiations on strengthening the links between climate change, biodiversity

and cultural diversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ensure the effective participation of indigenous peoples.

17. The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, university research centres and relevant United Nations agencies conduct further studies on the impacts of climate change and climate change responses on indigenous peoples who are living in highly fragile ecosystems, such as low-lying coastal areas and small island States; semi-arid and arid lands and dry and sub-humid lands (grasslands); tropical and subtropical forests; and high mountain areas.

18. The Permanent Forum recommends that States that have not already done so assign environment a more important profile in strategic planning initiatives at the national level and, in particular, in e-government initiatives so that the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) for the environment is integrated into planning processes from the beginning, along with other national priorities and initiatives (disposal of ICT equipment).

19. The Forum decides to appoint Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Lars Anders-Baer, members of the Permanent Forum, as special rapporteurs to prepare a report on various models and best practices of mitigation and adaptation measures undertaken by indigenous peoples from various parts of the world. The Forum also requests that these special rapporteurs, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, also prepare a draft declaration of action on climate change and indigenous peoples, which can include a road map for indigenous peoples towards the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and beyond. These will be presented at the eighth session of the Forum.

20. The Permanent Forum calls for urgent, serious and unprecedented action by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, along with all United Nations bodies and agencies, recognizing that climate change is an urgent and immediate threat to human rights, health, sustainable development, food sovereignty, and peace and security, and calls upon all countries to implement the highest, most rigorous and most stringent levels of greenhouse gas reduction.

21. The Permanent Forum urges States responsible for major sources of pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases to be accountable by enforcing and upholding stricter global pollution regulations that will apply to polluting parties.

22. The Permanent Forum recommends that States develop mechanisms through which they can monitor and report on the impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples, mindful of their socio-economic limitations as well as spiritual and cultural attachment to lands and waters.

23. The Permanent Forum calls on States to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and principles of sustainability and to call on transnational corporations to respect those standards. This applies particularly to highly industrialized States and the transnational corporations that engage in development activities in those States.

24. The Permanent Forum calls on all United Nations agencies and States to support the reclamation of traditional practices and laws leading to global solutions to climate change.

25. The Permanent Forum recommends that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant United Nations agencies further develop and enhance natural disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies involving indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of those strategies.

26. The Permanent Forum recommends that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights promote the elaboration of a report on the impacts of climate change and indigenous peoples by the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people.

Participation

27. The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and relevant parties develop mechanisms for indigenous peoples' participation, as appropriate, in all aspects of the international dialogue on climate change, particularly the forthcoming negotiations for the next Kyoto Protocol commitment period, including by establishing a working group on local adaptation measures and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum encourages dialogue and cooperation among indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women and youth, States, conservation and development organizations and donors in order to strengthen the participation of indigenous peoples in dialogue on climate change.

28. The Permanent Forum calls on States to ensure that indigenous peoples that are undertaking their own mitigation measures are provided with policy support, technical assistance, funding and capacity-building in order to deepen their knowledge on climate change and to allow them to implement more effective mitigation and adaptation strategies. They should gain benefits from the environmental services derived from their territories and resources. Processes and mechanisms for the valuation of these environmental services, and methods that allow them to get adequate benefits, should be developed jointly with them. Efforts to create better documentation of good practices in mitigation and adaptation and to replicate and upscale these practices should likewise be supported.

29. The Permanent Forum supports collaborations between indigenous groups and conservation organizations that bring together traditional and scientific knowledge holders to add the wealth of current and historical knowledge of indigenous peoples to the analysis of impacts of climate change and to mitigation solutions and adaptation strategies — recognizing and respecting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the provisions of article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

30. The Permanent Forum recommends that donors and United Nations agencies give more support to indigenous peoples in Africa, where appropriate, to promote, recognize, protect and enhance indigenous traditional knowledge.

31. The Permanent Forum requests the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to undertake a specific assessment of the opportunities and threats for indigenous peoples arising from the various greenhouse gas emission strategies that are currently in place and will potentially come into operation to mitigate the impacts of climate change and requests that this assessment be undertaken with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples around the world.

32. The Permanent Forum urges indigenous academics, scientists and traditional knowledge holders to organize their own processes to consolidate their knowledge and experiences in climate change science into a report that can feed into the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Permanent Forum.

Adaptation and mitigation

33. The Permanent Forum recommends that the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in cooperation with States, provide adaptation funds to indigenous peoples affected by climate change-related disasters. Indigenous peoples whose lands have already disappeared or have become uninhabitable or spoilt due to seawater rise, floods, droughts or erosion, and who have thus become environmental refugees or displaced persons, should be provided with appropriate relocation with the support of the international community.

34. The Permanent Forum recommends following the example of indigenous peoples, who have been the stewards of the land and sea for millennia when allocating research and development funding and setting the criteria for clean development mechanism projects, policymakers at the State and multilateral levels must look beyond the simple question of whether a particular form of alternative energy or carbon absorption technique can provide a short-term reduction in greenhouse gases. Policymakers should consider the long-term sustainability of any mitigation policy they choose.

35. The Permanent Forum calls on all States that have not yet done so to implement the 2005 Kyotò Protocol, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other international initiatives that address climate change and biocultural diversity in conjunction with indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, in a full and effective way. The Annex I countries should implement their commitments to the Kyoto Protocol by doing all they can to shift their economic systems towards low-carbon systems instead of relying mainly on the purchase of emission credits to offset their emissions. The fast-industrializing developing countries should also undertake serious efforts to cut their emissions and develop low-carbon energy systems.

36. The Permanent Forum recommends that States, the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral financial institutions consider alternative systems beyond the perpetuation of highly centralized fossil-fuel-based energy supplies and large-scale bioenergy and hydropower dams and increase their support for renewable, low-carbon and decentralized systems, taking into account the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams. States should abandon old centralized electricity grids, which are not suitable for the challenges of climate change.

37. The Permanent Forum recommends that the recommendations and proposals that emerged from the consultations of indigenous peoples and the World Bank on the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and other carbon funds, such as the BioCarbon Fund, be implemented by the Bank and other relevant agencies. Indigenous peoples should be effectively involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Displacement and exclusion of indigenous peoples from their forests, which may be triggered by projects funded by the Partnership Facility, should be avoided at all costs. Indigenous peoples or their representatives should have a voice in and a vote on the

decision-making body of the Partnership Facility and of other climate change funds that will have impacts on them. In the case of those who opt not to participate in reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation or in the projects supported by the Partnership Facility, their choice should be respected.

38. The Permanent Forum urges the Human Rights Council expert mechanism on indigenous peoples to evaluate whether existing and proposed climate change policies and projects adhere to the standards set by the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These bodies, together with the members of the Inter-Agency Support Group for Indigenous Issues, should collaborate with States, multilateral bodies, donors and indigenous peoples to effectively ensure that the implementation of the Declaration is central to the design and implementation of climate change policies and programmes.

39. The Permanent Forum reaffirms the need for all actors to respect the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples to decide on mitigation and adaptation measures in their lands and territories.

40. The Forum calls on indigenous peoples' organizations, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to develop popular education materials on climate change and climate mitigation and adaptation measures and undertake education and training activities at the local levels. The Forum also recommends that information ICT be used to disseminate and raise awareness of indigenous peoples' perspectives and issues on climate change.